

SEA Community of Practice: Performance Frameworks

Performance Framework Part 1

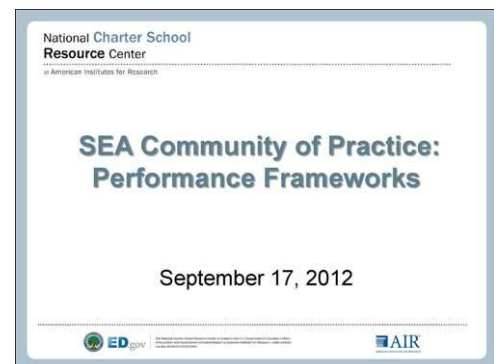
TAMMIE:

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the “SEA Community of Practice: Performance Frameworks” webinar. My name is Tammie Knights from the National Charter School Resource Center. As you know, the Resource Center is funded by the Department of Education’s Charter School’s program and serves as the national center to provide resources, information, and technical assistance to support the successful planning, authorization, implementation, and sustainability of high-quality charter schools to share evaluations of the effects of charter schools and to disseminate information about successful practices in charter schools.

This is our fourth in a series of four webinars for the SEA community. I want to quickly remind you about our webinar platform for those who haven’t joined or haven’t been on for awhile. You can listen to the audio portion either through your computer or over the phone. I encourage you to join by phone for this webinar. If you do join by phone, please mute your computer speakers to prevent an echo effect, and if you are not prompted to enter your phone number, please dial the number that is listed in the chat. For any questions you have, please enter them in the chat throughout the webinar. In the chat, you will find information about how to log on and other notes. And, as a reminder, the webinar is being recorded, so to ensure audio quality, I may mute any participants if there’s any background noise, and when you’re ready to speak you can press *6 to unmute and speak over the phone.



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Today we're excited to have two speakers to talk about performance frameworks. We have Amy Ruck and Chris Busse. Amy is the acting director of the New Jersey State Department of Education's Charter School Office. Prior to her work with the New Jersey Department of Education, Amy served as an in-house expert on the charter school movement for all care provider services and was the program manager for new school development and school operations at the New York City Charter School Center.

Chris Busse of the Texas Charter Schools Association will also participate in the webinar. As vice president of quality initiatives, Chris is responsible for the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of the association's trademark quality framework. In his previous role with the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Chris was instrumental in defining the foundation's strategic focus on performance management. His signature grants and initiatives included defining common indicators, planning and executing performance management tools, and developing breakthrough intervention effectiveness tools.

And with that said, I'm going to turn it over for Amy. Again, please enter any questions you have for Amy or Chris in the chat, and we will get to them. Amy, I'll turn it over to you.

About the Resource Center

The **U.S. Department of Education** is committed to promoting effective practices, providing technical assistance, and disseminating the resources critical to ensuring the success of charter schools across the country. To that end, the Education Department, under a contract with American Institutes for Research, has developed the **National Charter School Resource Center**.

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Presenter

Amy Ruck
Acting Director
Charter School Program
New Jersey Department of Education

Chris Busse
Vice President
Quality Initiatives
Texas Charter Schools Association

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Charter School Performance Framework

New Jersey Department of Education
Office of Charter Schools
September 2012

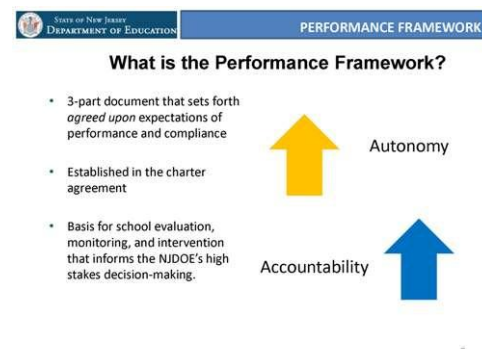
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AMY:

Sure. Hi everyone. Thanks for attending. So just recently named director, so I can remove the acting, so that's very exciting, along with the work in the performance framework. So I just want to give a quick little background, and then I'll launch into the slides. Here in New Jersey we are an SEA, so we're the sole authorizer in the state, as well as the state education agency. We have 86 schools operating right now, so this year, in 2012, we opened nine new schools, and we also closed three schools in the past year. So definitely moving toward the system in which we are knowing our schools much better through the use of data and then using the performance framework as a critical piece, the backbone to all of the work that we do helping us define and set standards of success and then let us know which of our schools sort of are meeting our quality criteria.

So when we look at the performance framework, we really say that our performance framework has three parts, so it has an academic section, a fiscal section, and an organizational section; and within the, excuse me, within the PowerPoint, I'll get to some more detail about each of the three sections. Then I do have my colleague also on the line, so he might jump in and let me know, of course, what I forgot here.

So we aligned our framework to sort of the larger New Jersey state accountability system and then the ESEA waiver that New Jersey had received. We established the performance framework within our charter agreement, so each one of our schools is held to the terms of a charter agreement, which lays out this sort of terms and conditions of operating a charter school in the state of New Jersey very closely aligned to both our statutes and our

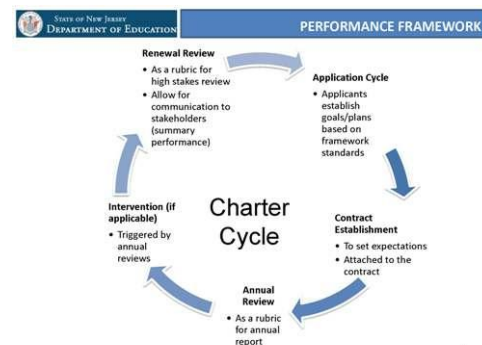


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regulation. The framework is a new part, so we actually had to revamp our regulations this year to include the performance framework. So it's new to our schools, and I will say, if any of the states or any of the other authorizers are looking to sort of implement a performance framework, I have some great resources that we've developed, but stakeholder input is essential to making sure that the framework aligns with sort of both the standards that you want to set, but also the buy-in from all of the various stakeholders whether that's state associations, the different schools, legislators, so on, and so forth.

So again, we say that the framework is going to be the basis for all of these high-stakes decisions, so any of our renewal decisions, any of our closure decisions, and as well as any of our application approval decisions. So it's a section in our new application that says here's the performance framework, and we need to see goals and an implementation plan around how you will meet the standards that we lay out in the framework. We really see this as part of the essential charter bargain that, you know, for sort of higher autonomy you're going to get higher levels of accountability also. So basic terms of the framework is that it's the basis for all evaluation, monitoring, intervention, and then any high-stakes decision making that follows.

As part of this charter life cycle, we want to see the performance framework guiding everything from the application, as I said, to any sort of renewal decision cycle. So, as we said, it's included in the goals section of our application, and then it is also as a report out in all of these renewal applications that we have. We see the framework as the guiding force and as a rubric for evaluation, and we are also, in using the framework, making commitment to



being in the schools more frequently. The performance framework is going to give us some very clear data points, but we also need to make sure that the data that is being given to us has real-world sort of application. So I think, as you'll see later on, the organizational framework is the one that we're going to need to see sort of come to life most evidently based in the school.

So going throughout that the purpose and goal section of the performance framework ensures that each and every New Jersey charter school is serving students with a high-quality public education. It's setting these clear academic, organizational and fiscal standards, and again, it's for all schools, so all schools know at the time of their application and they know at the time of their renewal what the standards are and how they're being evaluated against the set of standards. It provides the continuity of the charter life cycle, and it gives us a consistent language from which we can base all of our conversations about every charter school here in New Jersey. And then the key for us is that it allows all stakeholders, including those New Jersey families that are serving charter school children and, as well as ones that, you know, are looking to have charters as choice to make informed decisions about which charter school they're going to send their child to.

Going along, we talk about the framework in the three sections, with these three questions as the spine of the framework: so is the academic program a success, is the school financially viable, and is the school equitable and organizationally sound? So when you remove these three questions sort of from the framework, as the authorizer we believe that we need to see the right answers to these questions in any of our high-stakes decisions. At the time of

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Performance Framework Purpose and Goals

- Ensures that each and every NJ charter school is serving students with a high-quality public education.
- Sets clear academic, organizational and fiscal standards by which all NJ public charter schools will be evaluated.
- Provides continuity of charter cycle with consistent language from the application to renewal.
- Allows stakeholders, including NJ families, to make informed decisions about charter school performance and quality.

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PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Performance Framework Guiding Questions

Academic	Financial	Organizational
Is the academic program a success?	Is the school financially viable?	Is the school equitable and organizationally sound?

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application, again, we want to make sure that we can stand behind the program that they're putting forward, that it's researched based, that it has sort of a sound implementation plan. At renewal, we want to see the data that has shown that everything that they have put forward in their academic educational program actually has the proven results. Is the school financially viable? And again, we'll launch into this a little bit more in detail. But both in the short term and the long term, do they have the right financial systems in place to sustain them? And then is the school equitable, is it open to all students, equitable in their different processes, and is it organizationally sound in terms of governance and so on?

So launching a little bit more specifically into the academic section—I want to highlight a few things before we go into the slide. The academic framework only contains outcome measures. We definitely think that student outcomes are the most important factor when we talk about whether charter schools are providing a high-quality education to students. These are the different components of the academic framework and then the definitions that we use within the framework.

So the first component is indicators, and indicators are general categories of performance. So an example of that is the student achievement, and, as we'll see on the next slide, there are six indicators that we use throughout the framework. Within each indicator then there's multiple measures. The measures are the second component of the framework, and they're defined as the general way that we evaluate the aspect of an indicator. The one T measure that we use throughout the framework is proficiency, and so in New Jersey we have the NJ ASK and the HSPA, so that's our K–8 test and then

State of New Jersey DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION		ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK
Academic Framework Components		
Component	Definition	Example
Indicators	General categories of academic performance	Student Achievement (Absolute)
Measures	General means to evaluate an aspect of an indicator	Proficiency on State Assessments
Metrics	Method of quantifying a measure	Percentage of students achieving proficiency on state assessment
Targets	Thresholds that signify success for a specific measure	70% of students achieve proficiency on state assessment

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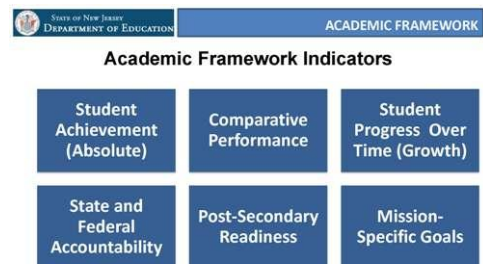
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our high school test, so that's the measure of the indicator. The metric is the method of quantifying the measure, and it's the percentage of students achieving proficiency on state tests. Another important gross metric that we use would be student growth percentile.

And then the last component of the framework is the target. The target is the threshold that needs to be hit to signify success or quality. For most measures within our framework, there are four targets, and then we can launch certainly into more detail about how they're calculated. We kept to this pretty general, but if anyone has follow-up questions, we're happy to walk you through what our analysis looked like and sort of what the testing that we had to do on our all of our schools is in order to set where our targets were. So I'm happy to share any of that information with people later on.

So again, as I said, our framework uses six indicators: so student achievement, which is our sort of absolute performance; comparative performance; student growth or sort of their progress over time; state and federal accountability; postsecondary readiness, excuse me; and then mission-specific goals. It was really critical for us during the creation of the framework to look at these multiple indicators in order to create a robust system that looks not only at absolute achievement but both the comparative measures and the growth. And then for high schools, we wanted to make sure that our schools are preparing students to be college and career ready, which is one of the major goals for the New Jersey Department of Education.

I think, when you see the mission-specific goals, this is really a sort of difficult area to capture for each of our schools, so as we know each charter

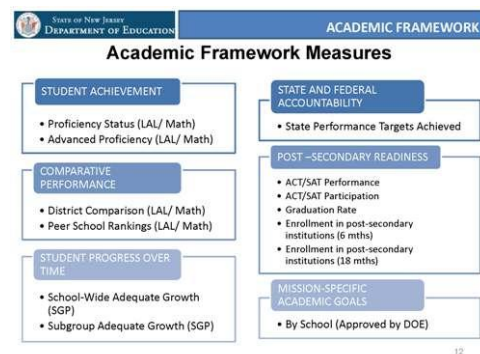


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school has a unique mission. What we're really wanting to do is not take away from those schools' missions, whether it's a specific population they're trying to serve or a certain theme to the school, but work with the school to be able to sort of put together smart goals—we've all used that term—and how they are going to measure the success of whether or not they're achieving the mission, and get schools to think about that very early on so that each year, when we're looking and evaluating the performance framework, we can also see how they're doing against their own mission.

So launching into some more specifics about the academic framework, and, again, this is an overview, because we could spend hours upon hours on how each of the different sort of targets within these categories. So the first indicator is student achievement, and here we're looking at whether or not students are meeting standards for proficiency on state assessments. While growth is obviously going to be a very important indicator, sort of absolute performance is the first factor we look at, because we believe that charter schools should still ultimately be held accountable for bringing students up to and then beyond grade level. We're also looking here at advance proficiencies, because we don't want schools to only focus on students below proficiency, but we want to see that schools that are getting students that are already proficient moving towards the next level.

So in the second indicator comparative performance, we're looking at a school's performance in a couple of different ways. We're going to be comparing the school's performance against their comparative district, and we define that sort of comparative home district as the district from



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which they're pulling the majority of their children. And then also we're looking at the peer school comparison for each school, so that's sort of a complicated measure that we're working with our performance office to define. Basically, what they're going to do is they're going to rank each school based on different demographical data. They'll then sort of take the common demographical sort of statistics and create a peer school index so that each charter school will be compared to 29 similar schools, and then we'll be able to see where the charter school falls within that sort of peer school demographical comparison. It's still under construction, and we're working with the performance office to sort of have all that system in place, but that will be in place by, we think, January or February, so at the start of the next calendar year we'll be able to include this measure within our framework.

The third indicator, as we said, is sort of student growth, their progress over time. It measures how much students are learning and improving year-by-year. The measure we're going to be using is student growth percentile, and the metrics will be both their median student growth percentile—and we call it SGP—within a school but then also by their relevant subgroup. The SGP looks at growth of a student year-to-year against students with similar academic histories or similar test scores in previous years. Each student with at least two consecutive years of NJ ASK scores will receive a student growth percentile. That percentile will then measure how the student's performance changed relative to other students statewide with similar scores.

I can point people to a really great resource about measuring student growth. It's a pretty complicated sort of statistical analysis, but we think it gives some

great information about the individual student. So I have a PowerPoint that I'm happy to send out as a resource or send it through Tammie, so please let us know. Student growth percentiles range from 1 to 99, where the higher numbers represent higher growth, and then the lower numbers represent lower growth. The metric we are holding schools accountable for within the framework is the median SGP of the school or a subgroup, and they need at least 40 SGP scores in these categories for the median to actually be relevant.

So moving on to the state and federal accountability— it's aligned, as I said, to our ESEA waiver. Within the waiver, there's a way to calculate performance targets for every school across the state, and then there's also these designations of reward, focus, and priority schools. Very quickly: reward are sort of the top performers; focus and priority, lowest performing schools; priority are the lowest 5 percent in our state; and then focus is sort of that next category, and it's based on gaps in performance. This indicator measures whether the school is hitting those targets based on what was put forward in the waiver.

The target within the waiver for every school is to decrease the number of nonproficient students by 50 percent in the next five years. And then we felt that it was very important to call out this measure separately. We recognize the importance of the overall state accountability system, and we want the performance framework to make sure that it's aligned to the categories that we put forward. At the same time, we didn't want the waiver to limit how we evaluate a school, so that's why it's a separate category within here.

Fifth indicator is the postsecondary readiness. It largely depends, you know, so again as the SEA, it largely depends on what information our performance division can collect. So, as the SEA, I know similar agencies are going to have the same issues whether they're collecting college entrance, college graduation, all of that information. I know I've worked with some other authorizers that are the district level. So you really have to think through what makes most [audio blank [00:17:55]] and what information you can get to make sure that this gives you enough information.

It examines how well a school's students are prepared for college and career. Our framework includes SAT and ACT results, graduation rates, and enrollment in college. It certainly depends on the coordination between the K–12 and the postsecondary data systems and there's a lot of information sharing that has to come through, and you have to make sure that you can have the most valid data.

At this point in time, the targets for most of these measures have not been set, because we're still trying to figure out how the information is going to come to us and then how we can then build our target. We wanted to get our performance framework out and into the public, so what we've done is we've had conversations with all our stakeholders. We leaved a space within the performance framework, we've left it blank, but we want to be able to both, excuse me, both test and implement these targets and these goals so that we can make sure we're setting them in the right areas.

And then, as I said earlier, the mission-specific goal sections—we know that each school has a unique mission-specific goal. Our schools, for example,

have these both academic and nonacademic goals outlined within their charter; but without knowing what their student population is and without having the baseline data, we found that it's very difficult for them to be accurate and specific in setting those goals. So what we're asking them to do with these frameworks is that, as part of their annual report, they're setting their goals aligned to their mission, as I said, based on the smart-goal thinking. We're going to be spending a lot of our time working one-on-one with each of the schools to make sure that they have measurable goals for this section.

So in the financial framework, so another section, basically we're establishing clear expectations for financial performance and sustainability. We certainly believe that charter schools have the autonomy to manage their finances as they see fit within the parameters of state and federal law, but schools are also responsible for ensuring that the charter program is both financially stable and viable. We believe that then our role, as the authorizer, is to make high-stakes decisions based, in part, on the financial health and viability of the school, and we need this as a tool to evaluate all of the critical elements.

We see the financial framework as a monitoring tool, excuse me, that provides us with the key data points to assess the financial health and viability of the schools in our portfolios and then to determine whether or not we need further analysis in each of the different indicators. There's a set you'll see of eight interconnected metrics, and we are able to analyze the current state of the charter school while taking into account the school's financial trend. The measures and the framework are designed to be complementary, and looked at together they're able to provide a lens into the school's near-term

State of New Jersey
Department of Education

FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Financial Performance Framework

- Gauges both **near term financial health** and **longer term financial sustainability**.
- Identifies schools that may be in **severe financial distress** (at risk for closure for failure to meet financial obligations) and schools that are experiencing **negative financial trends** that could leave the school in financial distress.
- Authorizers will use the following to evaluate schools against the framework:
 - Audited balance sheet
 - Audited income statement
 - The notes to the audited financial statements
 - Board approved budget with enrollment targets
 - Actual enrollment information
 - Annual Debt schedule, indicating the total principal and interest due

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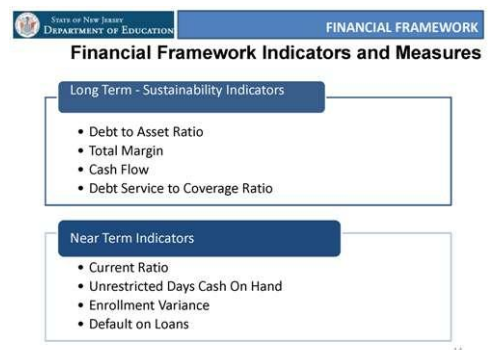
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financial situation, historic trends, and then as well as their future viability.

Unfortunately, the framework doesn't provide a relative measure of the school's financial position. It doesn't include any measures that analyze how the school expends its funds. But our intent is to assess the school's financial position as opposed to evaluating a school's spending decision. And I will say that the way that we were able to derive all of this in the framework—we base it on other model authorizer practices: Chicago Public Schools, D.C., SUNY. We also talked to Raza Development Fund and Denver Public Schools in looking on all of this.

So within the framework, as I said, we have both the long-term sustainability indicators and then the near-term indicators. So when we look at—I'm going to start with the long-term—so the debt to asset ratio measures a school's liabilities relative to its assets. The total margin looks at a measure of whether the school is generating a surplus or a deficit. The cash flow is a measure of whether the—yeah—cash flow, sorry, is a measure of whether the school is generating a cash surplus or deficit. And then the debt service to coverage ratio is the measure of the school's ability to meet its debt payment obligation.

Going back to the near-term indicators, the current ratio is the measure of the school's ability to meet its near-term financial obligation. Unrestricted day's cash on hand is the measure of the school's ability to cover projected expenses without additional cash receipts. Enrollment variance, a measure of the school's actual enrollment compared to its budgeted enrollment. And then the debt service to coverage is basically a measure of whether or not a school is meeting the terms of its loan.

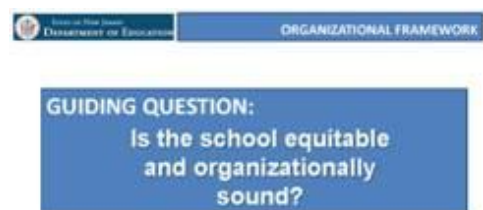


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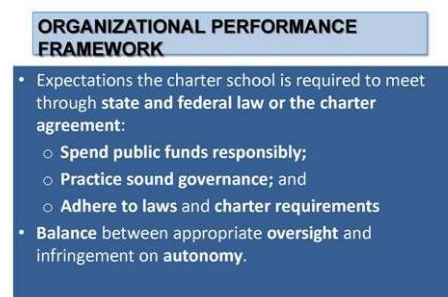
So schools that fail the near-term indicators, we find, are at risk for financial distress, and certainly it's going to require additional monitoring and/or probationary corrective action. And then we would say schools that fail the sustainability indicators are a little bit more complex to analyze. We certainly need to figure out are they trending towards financial distress, is there a sound rationale in what's happening? But it gives us that snapshot from which we can then look at a little bit more deeply.

So for the organizational framework—and I'm speeding up a little because I realize I'm taking a lot of time—the guiding question we use here: Is the school equitable and organizationally sound? Organizational Performance Framework—it sets the expectations that the school is required to meet through state and federal law or the charter agreement, and basically we highlighted a few: Spend public funds responsibly, practice sound governance, and adhere to laws and charter requirements. It's a balance between the appropriate oversight and the infringement on autonomy.

So we'll say quickly the organizational framework is very tricky as the authorizer and especially as an authorizer who both needs to be monitoring compliance but who also wants to be flexible and give schools the autonomy that we feel they deserve. It was very tricky to find this right balance, but I think that focusing on sort of both the equity pieces which make sure that both the students have the access to the education that is sort of an application process is not leaving them out. On the compliance side that, you know, everything is being done, everything is being reported, on the



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governance side that we have sound governance, and then sort of on the leadership side not for us to judge what is quality leadership but look at what's happening in the school. Look at leadership turnover, look at staff turnover. It's finding the right balances of all of those pieces working together to answer that original question about the school, which was—oh, thought I could move back a slide—is the school equitable and organizationally sound?

So, sorry, moving on. The educational—so the organizational program has these seven indicators. So the education program is whether or not the school is meeting the essential terms of the charter—whether they have their curriculum alignment, and that's really key as we all transition to the common core. Are they using data to drive decision making? Are they looking at data to help inform what decisions they're making regarding their educational program? And then the education requirements: Are they serving the special ed students? The ELL students? Are they meeting all of the laws within that, monitoring, having the right program, and so on?

The equity piece is one that is very interesting here in New Jersey. Newark, for example, which is getting a lot of attention, Newark, actually Newark District, actually put out a charter compact with all of its schools, with all the charter schools and asked them to adhere to specific equity standards in order to operate the charter school within the district. We looked at their compact, and there were actually some really great characteristics that we wanted to incorporate into our framework here. So are there equitable admissions and enrollments standards, equity within students with disabilities and English language learners, and then do we see attrition in



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enrollment stability within the school? On the school culture side, we're looking at a mission alignment and high expectation, and then we're looking for family and community involvement.

In the governance section, we're looking, you know, we're looking at governance I'd say through two different lenses. One, are they meeting sort of the terms of what they put in their application and their bylaws? And then how are they doing governing the school? Do they have sort of evaluation practices in place, for example? Are they understanding what their role is in operating accordingly? Under the facilities and safe school environment, we're just looking to make sure that they're safe and secure facilities and safe and secure school environment. So that's everything from having the right certificates of occupancy at the school to the students understanding what their expectations are and the families being engaged in the process.

The financial management and oversight—so two areas here that are very different from the financial framework. Are they doing all of their financial reporting? Are they submitting their audit on time? Are they complying with all of our sort of fiscal regulations? And then do they have a gap accounting system in place? And then the reporting and compliance is our sort of catch-all area. Are they meeting all of the sort of compliance issues with the federal and state regulations and statutes and then other compliance? So, for example, in New Jersey, that could be everything from sort of certification in residency to having an SBA, which is a school business administrator on staff. So catch-all box there to make sure that everything that the school has to report to the county office and the state office is what's being done at the school level.

So very quickly—and then are there any questions for me [audio blank 00:28:24] or we can answer them after.

QUESTIONS?

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Performance Framework Part 2

TAMMIE:

Yes, that's fine, Amy. If there's any questions that the participants have for you specifically about your framework, that would be fine.

AMY:

Okay.

TAMMIE:

It looks like we have one coming, so...

AMY:

Okay.

TAMMIE:

And, if you're on the phone, you can actually speak, if you want, or you can type it into the chat.

GINA:

Hi, this is Gina Schleissman [ph] (inaudible 00:00:27). I had a question about, you mentioned the SEA requirements.

AMY:

Yes.

GINA:

We're having some difficulty with some of what we deemed to be qualified business people on our staff. Talk a little bit more about what you guys require in that area.

AMY:

Sure, and I will say that it's a requirement that I don't believe actually ensures quality, so, and I think that's really challenging. So what the state requires is that a school business administrator actually

holds a school business administrator license, and that's actually a track within sort of a higher ed program. Getting that license does require mentoring, does require time spent in school, so on, and so forth. But what I will say we see happening all the time is that we see the SBAs circulating from one school to the other, and the schools not following up on sort of reasons for whether or not that person was let go or whatever it may or may not have been.

We also see—the requirement very clearly reads that there has to be an SBA of record at the school—so we actually see this as sort of a growing business, and we see that the SBAs or maybe the SBA of record for six or seven schools and collecting various salaries from those schools. Somebody is there day-to-day, but the person signing off is the “SBA.” So it's something we are trying to get under control, and I am very wary of saying that that actually gives us better oversight of the school. I don't think there's any correlation that I can yet prove.

GINA:

Yeah, it sounds like—

AMY:

Same issues?

GINA:

Yeah.

AMY:

Yeah.

GINA:

So thanks. I was just wondering if there was a better to try and...

AMY:

I think we're all grappling with that, definitely.

GINA:

Thanks.

TAMMIE:

Great, thank you. With that said, we'll turn it over to Chris to hear about another quality framework from a different perspective from an authorizer, I'm sorry, not an authorizer, a charter school association perspective.

CHRIS:

Thanks, Tammie. This exactly is what Tammie just said, a little bit of a different perspective. While we are not the authorizer, as much as I would love to be, we are the association that represents open enrollment charter schools in the state of Texas. We currently have about 90 percent of the schools in the state as our members, and the total number of schools in Texas this year should eclipse 600, so you know, definitely we feel like we're a large and diverse and growing movement. So, in order to serve all of those schools, when the association started about three and a half years ago, there was clearly a commitment to quality because there had been about, at that point, about 11 or 12 years of charter history in the state. In a sense, rightfully so, was that quality was at the same time an opportunity and a threat into the viability of the movement.



TCSA Quality Framework:
Continuous Improvement for Texas Charters



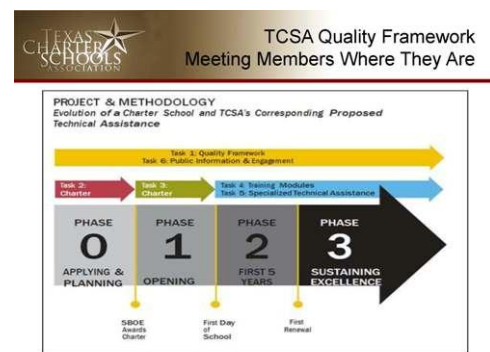
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So what the schools who were participating in the creation of the association did then was come up with a quality pledge that—I'm having trouble; there we go—that every member has to sign, which says, among other things, we will hold ourselves collectively accountable to quality and those kinds of things. But, at the bottom of that box, the most important thing is they will complete a quality framework assessment and participate in this continuous improvement process, or they will no longer be eligible for membership in the association. And so, as we look to 2013, to renew our calendar year memberships with our member schools, there are some schools who have not yet done this process and not engaged with us in a meaningful way to improve on quality. And, you know, we will tell them they cannot renew their membership so that, as we go into legislative session in Texas in January of '13, we ensure that every member has participated in this process.



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So since we're not an authorizer and are currently not making high-stakes decisions, again, as I have mentioned, as much as I'd like to, we meet members where they are, as the slide indicates. And so, much like Amy talked about in New Jersey, we try to have a tool that helps folks whether they're in what we're calling Phase 0, on the left-hand side of the screen, meaning I haven't even applied for my charter yet, but I'm considering doing that, and I'm trying to get my head around everything that I would need to set up a quality charter school; through Phase 1, so I've been awarded my charter from the state, and I'm trying to get the first day of school; to Phase 2, which we're calling the first five years. Charters in Texas are given a five-year initial charter before they have to renew. And then Phase 3 is what we're calling sustaining excellence. So we had to develop a tool that would, again, meet



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people where they were to say whether you are considering starting a charter or you've been in existence since Texas started chartering schools in 1996, this tool will allow you to find yourself in that quality continuum and figure out most importantly where you need to go next.

So as we try to meet folks where they are—I don't know; all right, it's not moving; there we go—we try to...

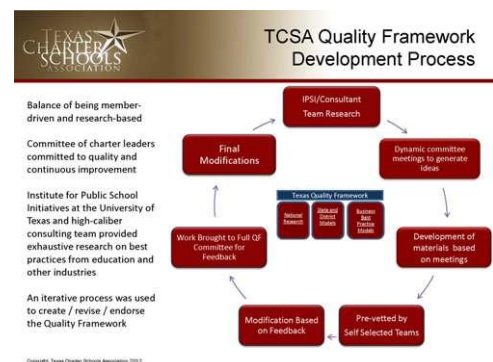
TAMMIE:

[Inaudible 00:05:55] I'll hit it for you.

CHRIS:

Thanks. We tried to come up with, again, a tool that would also be representative of the many kinds of charter schools we have in Texas, so a full 40 percent of our schools in Texas, charter schools in Texas, are dropout recovery schools, so in other words, they're serving kids who have already dropped out of their traditional public school and trying to get credit recovery and a high school diploma. You know, back the kids who are, in many cases, 19, 20, 21 years old. Almost every one of the juvenile justice schools and residential treatment schools in the state of Texas are charter schools, so we serve that population as well, along with, of course, what we consider the more traditional schools and some of the most famous sort of college prep networks [inaudible 00:06:44] idea of public schools, et cetera.

So we had to find a tool that would fit all of those types of schools as well, and so what we did is came up with this development process where, as you can see at the very top, we had an external consultant from the University of Texas come up with all of the research out there from many of your



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states, what you were doing in quality at the time, business practices, medical, those kinds of, you know, industries that regulate quality, et cetera. So we looked at all of those things and brought it back to a representative committee of charter operators to say okay, this is the research base. What makes sense in your collective experience? And so that was a very iterative process, as you might imagine and the committee came up with, again, a framework that they felt like balanced research and academic practices with experience, you know, and their collective experience.

So, on the next slide, you can see sort of what they came up with a structure perspective. So, at the top, you can see the three-step continuous improvement process. Step 1 is a self-evaluation, and I'll talk a little bit more about it in a second, but it's much like what Amy discussed in New Jersey. We were commenting that, even though we come from different perspectives in terms of an authorizer versus a state association, not to mention the not so subtle differences between New Jersey and Texas, and the, you know, environment in each of those states from a charter perspective, we both ended up coming up with a more holistic, I think, picture of quality that is not just focused on academics but rather on many of the operational things that, as Amy mentioned in New Jersey, and is certainly true in Texas trip up charter schools sometimes before academics actually trip them up. So that's the self-evaluation part.

Step 2 is the review in the data pack. So once the school team has gone through their assessment of their own situation, we bring back the more quantitative data side and comparative information so, as Amy mentioned, comparison to other charter schools is important. So since this is a process that



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all of our member schools go through, we're amassing this database of how have other charter schools across the state responded, and what does their data look like, and where do you fall in that continuum. So that's Step 2—basically kind of a check and balance, if you will, to their [audio blank 00:09:15].

And then, finally, Step 3 is my favorite part, the sort of what do we do about all this part, which includes all the tools and resources that we come up with, and I'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute. But as you might expect, as we go through this with different schools, we find schools who need a lot of help, and we find schools who have a lot of great practices to share. And so what we try to do then is match those things up, right. So if one school is a model in a particular area and another school is just getting started in that particular area, we try to share those best practices as quickly and as efficiently as we can to raise quality at all of our member schools.

So it is not—unlike New Jersey—since again, we're not the authorizer, it's not a pass/fail sort of accountability system at this point, but rather it is a common definition of quality that all of our schools can stand behind and that we at the association can then rally behind and say great. What is the next best thing we can do to improve our members' quality based on how the qualitative and quantitative scores are coming out? And I'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

The bottom right-hand corner of the slide you can see, again much like New Jersey, we came up with student success being the most important system, slides at the top, and it's the biggest but you can also see some of the systems in the green arrows

pointing upwards; mission and vision, learning, leadership, fiscal management, public accountability. Many of the things, again, Amy mentioned. All of those are also evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively in this process because, once again, we felt like those are often detractors from or contributors to ultimate success of a charter school. So that was what the overall structure that folks came up with.

On the next slide, you can see how this is evaluated, and so, as I mentioned earlier, schools find themselves on this continuum; so, from left to right, a school is getting more and more mature in a particular area. So, on the slide, you can see fiscal management system. The budget element, this school has an annual budget and budget process in place. So you go from “early effective,” the school has developed and implemented a budget that is approved by its board to “effective,” meaning okay, they’re using, actually you can witness them using historical data, year-over-year comparisons, those kinds of things. Has best and worst case scenarios, so some contingency-based budgeting, if you will, through highly effective and monthly budget reviews, rather than sometimes we just see an annual budget review. Do they do monthly reviews? Are they able to adjust on the fly as they see things coming in over and under budget? Are they able to adjust and bring the total budget in for the year?

To a model school that has implemented a spending profile—those of you who are familiar with that term, basically just means that it’s a real activity-based budgeting in real-time monitoring process that is quite sophisticated, frankly. And so, again, the theory is, or the process here, philosophy is schools find where they are on this continuum, and it also gives them specific statements to use to

TEXAS CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION **TCSA Quality Framework Components Indicators and Levels of Effectiveness**

FISCAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
Quality Standard: An effective Texas public charter school uses its resources in alignment with its mission to advance measurable, increased learning and development for each student served.

ELEMENT AND INDICATOR	NOT EVIDENT	EARLY EFFECTIVE	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE	MODEL
BUDGET ELEMENT The school has an annual budget and budget process in place.	No evidence consistently in place at the organization.	The school has developed and implemented a budget that is approved by the board.	The school uses historical data and appropriate metrics to compare year-over-year budgets and expenses. The school's budget forecasting is created with consideration of best-case and worst-case scenarios. The school executes timely budget amendments.	Monthly budget review and analysis are scheduled and occur. The school's budget process includes tracking actual expenditures versus forecasts.	The school has implemented a spending profile.

Members find themselves on this continuum to assess their level of effectiveness.

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say what would “better” look like. So many schools are adopting this as their continuous improvement or campus improvement planning process, and this gives them the exact kind of specific language that our state agency is looking for. In other words, if you’re working on your fiscal management, don’t just say you’re going to improve fiscal management at our school. Tell me we’re going to implement a spending profile or, you know, tell me more specifically what that looks like, and that gives the school and its finance committee, in this case, something, you know, more tangible to work towards. So we found this to be a really effective way for folks to understand, again, where they are and, most importantly, where they need to be.

On the next slide, you can get a snapshot of the portal that we use then for our members to access all of these, all of these tools. So this is a password-protected area where only members from that school, folks they’ve authorized to have access to their school’s information, can get access. As you can see in this circle, they can request an account that we then administer on our side, making sure that they should have access to whatever school they’re requesting. And then you can see, on the left-hand side, the self-assessment, the review and data pack, the tools and resources. It’s a one-stop shop where they come in and see all of this information in one place.

We’ve found, for a lot of our smaller or newer schools, this in and of itself is a, you know, pretty large step forward in terms of, I’m sure all of you have probably seen campus improvement plans that are, you know, in a binder on a shelf in someone’s office [audio blank 00:14:15] in someone’s worst case. And this is, again, intended to be something they can keep up real time. Folks



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can access from wherever they are, whenever they want to, and is a large step forward, in many cases, for our schools.

Moving forward to the next slide, you can see this is where then the school logs in and accesses their self-assessment. You can see, much like the guiding statements I showed you two slides ago, is the guiding statements here in the shaded box. They simply, on a radio button, click where the consensus is that they are for this particular indicator, and they just obviously move through the systems, as you can see on the left-hand side, through the progress indicators there; and so they just move through at their own pace. Again, it allows them to do it all in one sitting, which many schools do, or this online format also allows perhaps the finance team to meet and do that section, the HR team to do those sections, et cetera; and do it, again, on their own time, at their own convenience.

So once they've gone through the self-assessment, you can also see, at the bottom there, optional upload additional evidence, so we've allowed them to and requested for them to upload examples, so if they're assessing their stakeholder engagement, and they have served parent surveys, student surveys, staff surveys, it's a place where they can keep all of that information, again, electronically, in one place, which is helpful for them but also helpful for us because we can then use those and evaluate those for best practice sharing among all of our member schools.

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So once they do the self-assessment, they move on to the next slide, of course online, and they get their results. So you can see, on the left-hand side, they get their results immediately upon submission of how did we do by system. On the right-hand side, you can see they can drill down, if you will, by systems and indicators, as Amy was alluding to. Ours is organized similarly. You know, there are major and minor categories, if you will. So they can see how they scored. But then, on the next slide, the next question they often ask is, how did that change over time, and so this report shows them, if that particular question is red, they got worse year-over-year. If that particular question is green, they got better. And if it's sort of a shaded color, which came out a little pink on here but it's actually gray online, they stayed the same. And so this is a real quick, at-a-glance way for school leaders to say, you know, where do we get better, where are we falling further behind; and therefore, you know, where should we focus our time and effort?

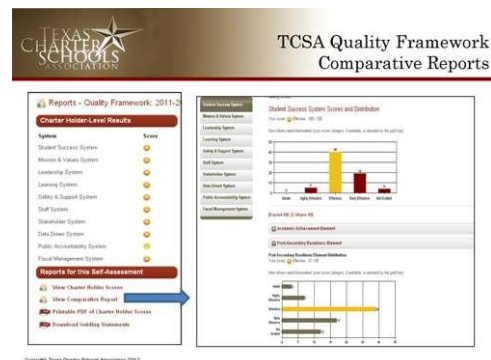


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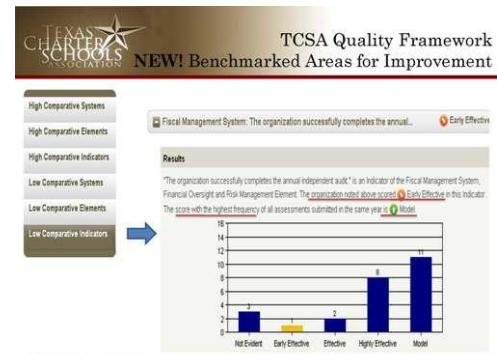
Another clear question that folks have asked us is on the next slide, which is how do I compare to other schools? And so not only again do I see and want to know how I score myself, but how does that fit in with the continuum of other schools? And so, on the right-hand side, you can see, in gold, is that school's score on this two-tier question, and the Pareto graph, if you will, shows where every other school, at that time, had scored themselves. So, in these particular cases, the school in question is right in the middle. And so, again, this, as you might expect, is a really interesting and powerful report for school leaders because, as is often the case in all schools, and particularly in charter schools, they can be a little bit of an island, and you can sometimes not have the perspective of other schools that you might in a traditional district



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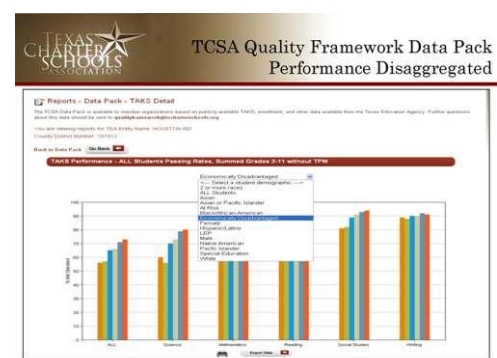
setting. So this allows them to say okay, am I as far ahead in this area as I think I am, or am I as far behind in this area as I think I am?

So the next slide—the system then comes up with the five highest and five lowest relative to every other school. So, on this slide, you can see the gold bar. They scored themselves “early effective,” which, in our terminology, again, is fairly low on the quality spectrum. And so you can see, to the right of their score, are many, many other schools that were doing, you know, a more mature job on this indicator than they are. And so this picks out the five highest and five lowest, so they can focus on what are we doing exceptionally well compared to others that we want to make sure we leverage in our planning, and what are we doing poorly in that we need to focus, you know, immediate attention? We’re trying to help our schools focus in on, you know, the handful of things they should work on rather than saying you should fix the following 84 things, and do it this week. So this is, again, I think, a really helpful report, and we’ve gotten really positive feedback on this from our members.



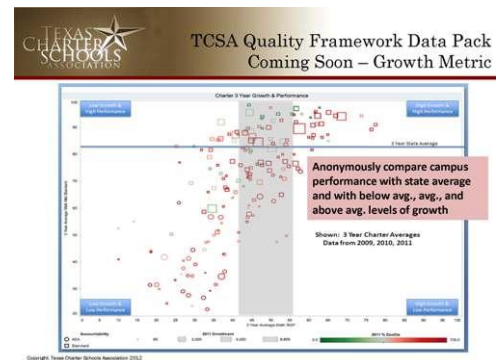
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On the next slide, you can see an example then of the data pack part, so once they figure out their assessment of their school and how that compares and contrasts with other schools, this data pack allows them to disaggregate all of the publicly available information and, you know, slice and dice it basically anyway they would like to. We’ve gotten feedback from our schools. This is taking the place of some of their data folks or data contracts that they had with outside folks to do their data, and so this allows them, again, to monitor their own performance in ways that we’ve, you know, found helpful at other schools and, of course, allows us to do the same thing on a more aggregated level.



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So they can do that. They can disaggregate the performance. On the next slide, you can see where they can access growth as well. As Amy mentioned, we feel like growth, you know, is key, and so we've provided, it sounds like, a very similar student growth percentile metric for our schools, which, you know, we're very excited about providing to them, and so that's out there as well.



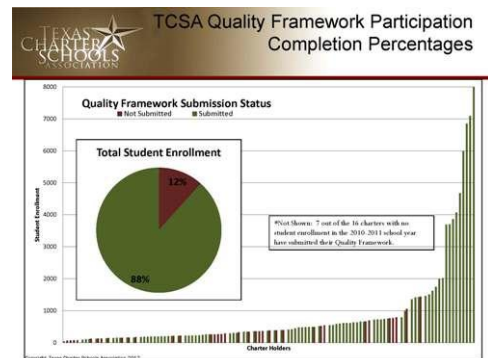
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On the next slide, you can see the tools and resources section. So once they've gone through and they've decided okay, I'm going to work on, in this case again, fiscal management. I'm not, you know, as satisfied in this area as I'd like to be with my school, so there are in these, between the tools and resources section, as you can see, downloadable presentations, links to our own associationwide insurance program, documents they can look at in terms of, in this case, educator liability. And so, again, these are resources, tools, techniques, templates, all those kinds of things that we are gathering and trying to add to every day so that our members have more and more resources to use so that when they do go through their high-stakes renewal, you know, process and decisions, they have these things at their fingertips and have used them to shore up their academics and their operations of.



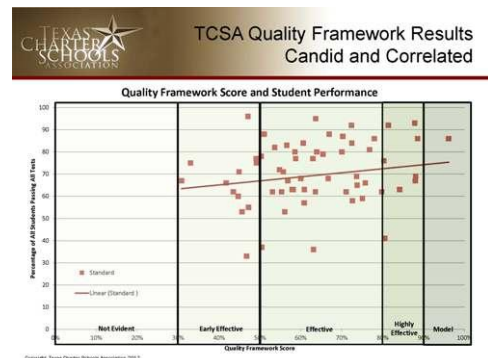
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Moving forward, the data that we're gathering here really helps us, of course, at the association as well. So I've taken you through a very brief and very top-level review of what a school sees and how they can benefit. But at the association or at the state SEA level, we benefit because, as you can see here, 88 percent of the charter school students in the state go to a school that has done this quality framework. And so, as you can imagine, that's a lot of students, a lot of schools, and a lot of data for us. And so we feel like that is a, you know, again, a strong commitment to quality but also a large database of tools and of data as well.



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So, as all the schools have gone through the framework, you can see, on the next slide, the results of that, and so as their quality framework self-assessment qualitatively moves from left to right, you can see nonevident through model, so from left to right getting better in quality on their qualitative measures, their quantitative measures, from bottom to top, as we measure them in the state, all students all tests past, are correlated. And so while some folks grade high and some folks grade low, you know, we use, as I mentioned, the quantitative data to calibrate that and so far, you know, the two are moving in the same direction, which we feel obviously good about.



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And then finally, we can, at the association, you know, the system allows us to look at, in this case, these are actually the questions that have the lowest scores, aggregate scores of the, you know, couple hundred campuses who have gone through this at this point. So things like you can see board conducts self-evaluations, a succession plan is in place or, in most cases, apparently is not in place, et cetera. And so in a real-time basis, this allows my team to look at this data and say okay, what's the

TCSA Quality Framework Results Benchmarked Areas for Improvement

Aggregated indicator-level data can be sorted to determine highest areas of need.

TCSA Quality Framework - SYSTEMS, ELEMENTS, INDICATORS	MODE
Board conducts self-evaluations.	19%
A succession plan is in place.	19%
The school or organization has a risk management plan in place.	31%
The school or organization has a focused marketing plan that is aligned to school/organization mission.	31%
School provides mentors for students.	31%
The school or organization has a clearly articulated vision.	31%
Stakeholder satisfaction with leadership is assessed.	31%

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next tool or resource we need to get out there? And we work hand-in-hand with our state agency, Texas Education Agency, to find tools and templates and resources that, you know, also obviate things that they're seeing on their side as well as they renew or don't renew charters. So it's been a really good way to partner with them to say, you know, help us help you make charters stronger; and frankly, at the end of the day, make the renewal decision a little bit easier on the TEA's benefit. So that also drives then our workload and our, you know, kind of next best opportunity here at the association.

So that was a very quick overview. I'm happy, of course, to take questions as well but also wanted to provide contact information in case there are questions that come up later, there are things that you like to learn more about. Obviously, I didn't go through the whole thing because it's too long to go through but happy to share different sections or whatever detail folks would like to understand.



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TAMMIE:

Thank you Chris. Are there any questions for Amy or Chris on their frameworks? Well, I had one question for either of you or both of you, which is how did you incorporate the different stakeholders of the charter community in the development of your frameworks, if you did include them?

AMY:

I can take a stab. I think, first of all, I am in awe and in admiration of Chris's work here, and I think, Chris, I'm going to connect you with our association, so we can model some of this. So I think I said earlier stakeholder sort of input was really essential to this process. I'm actually working through a program with NACSA [National Association of

Charter School Authorizers] , the national association, working with some other states on developing their frameworks. And I think it's critical to sort of lay out your timeline for when you would want to roll out a framework and really think through which points of sort of input are you willing to have and do you want to have, and what information do you want sort of readily available at those different points?

I think, as we all know, stakeholder input is extremely valuable but can also really sort of slow down the process of getting out the framework, so being very thoughtful about what questions you want to ask and to which groups. So saying that, we worked with our association, we worked within sort of the members of the association and sort of the focus group within that, and then we worked with sort of various schools throughout the process. We presented them sort of different drafts of the framework and incorporated their feedback and then would have sort of follow-up sessions.

In addition to that, we did a presentation at the New Jersey State Charter Schools Association conference, and we did that about four months before we rolled out the framework. So we presented to all of the schools and gave sort of contact information for them to give us feedback. So the schools saw the direction that we were going, and we worked with them to incorporate some more language around mission-specific goals specifically.

We then have done about three or four technical assistance training sessions with different groups of schools, so we did it with the nine schools we opened this year, our schools that are up for renewal, and broke it down further from there. All of them have been really great learning sessions. I

think one fact that I would carry through all of your sessions is that basing your framework on national best practices and having that sort of resource base to back up what you were saying. In addition, in developing the targets for the academic framework, it was really essential that we were able to show them sort of the levels of statistical analysis that went into setting the target. So we were actually able to sort of show them the data and demonstrate how we made the different points.

TAMMIE:

Thanks Amy.

CHRIS:

Yeah, from our perspective, I think, you know, we, as I alluded to on one of my slides, we definitely had to get a lot of member input because we felt like that would be key to the buy-in process, and then that has definitely proven true. So, I would just urge folks who might be considering starting that process to make sure that the group is representative of the different kinds of schools and perhaps even the different, you know, types of coalitions that you might have in your state from the charter school perspective so that each of them can go back to their peers and say this process, you know, and the end result from a quality perspective is fair and equitable, as Amy alluded to, but also, you know, hold high standards and hold the movement accountable to something that we can all be proud of. So, that was what we tried to do, and I'd say it was with some success.

TAMMIE:

Great. And Amy, I had another question for you—



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AMY:

Sure.

TAMMIE:

—which is that Chris sort of alluded to or mentioned in his presentation is: Do you differentiate between newly formed schools that are in their first contract cycle and when they're more established, or is that built into the framework somehow?

AMY:

So, certainly not—I mean yes and no, and I guess that's why I'm stumbling here. So the way that our charter terms work is that our brand new schools get a four-year charter term, and then subsequent renewals are five years, and we don't have any ability to give any other length from there. So our new schools are actually much more sort of familiar with this process and comfortable with the performance framework. It's actually been our older schools that are sort of having a more difficult time adopting this new language, I would say.

So what we've had to do is sort of—we've rolled out the framework, we've rolled out the contract, but, for example, the schools that are up for renewal this year that, you know, will not have the five years of

data laid out in the performance framework report. We will still give them a transparent report of what their performance was against the framework. But we will continue to do all of the other pieces for renewal that they've been familiar with in the last few years. Going forward, though, it will be purely, renewal decisions will be much more clearly linked to the performance framework.

So I think the key here, as the authorizer, because you're rolling it out to schools at all various stages, is being transparent about what you're doing and sort of, by your transparency, demonstrating the level of value that the framework can add. So that's going to come up in stages, but we're certainly—so, for example, all of our schools submitted their annual report this year. The annual report came before the new performance framework. It is then our job to lay out a report that mirrors the information we received in the annual report as well as each school's performance against the measures in the framework. So they'll be seeing the information in two different ways as we familiarize them with the framework.

TAMMIE:

Thanks Amy. And Chris, you have a question, which was wondering how often schools revisit and update their quality framework.

CHRIS:

Yeah. So Gina, it's a great question, and so you might expect schools do this, you know, in different ways. We set an expectation that every two years they would go through the qualitative part. We update their quantitative, you know, information as it comes available, you know, real time throughout the year. But we've had schools who go through it even multiple times a year, like once a semester, basically. And so we've allowed that to be

somewhat flexible right now as we just tried to get folks on the tool and to understand how it can supplant, you know, a lot of their other planning processes. And we hope, and see, and can track that folks actually go online, you know, when they're not, after they've gone through the qualitative part, and access tools and resources; and so again, we hope it's a site that they use for that purpose all the time.

TAMMIE:

Well, to respect everyone's time it is 4:02, actually. I do want to thank everyone for participating in the webinar, and if you have more questions or want to connect with Amy or Chris, you can do so directly or through me at the Charter School Resource Center. So you know, again, this webinar will be archived at the National Charter School Resource Center website in our webinar section, and I will also post it to our SEA/CFP exchange online.

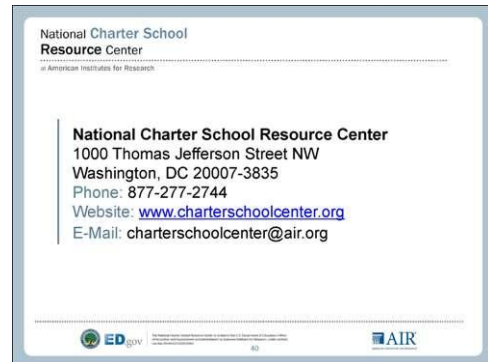
So thank you again for participating, and if you would, please take a couple of minutes to do the survey that will pop up on your screen after I end the webinar. Have a wonderful Monday and a terrific rest of the week, and thank you Amy and Chris for sharing your frameworks with us today.



Thank you for participating.

- Continue the conversation at the meeting of SEA Project Directors next week or online through the CSP Exchange: <http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/group/csp-exchange>.
- This webinar will be archived at the following website: <http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/webinars/>
- Please share your feedback with us through the evaluation.

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